

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Skidmore/Old Town Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Portland

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

3rd

STATE

Oregon

CODE

41

COUNTY

Multnomah

CODE

051

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☒ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☒ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☒ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Multiple

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Multnomah County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

1021 SW Fourth Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Portland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

National Register of Historic Places

DATE

December 30, 1975

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS OAHPS/ National Park Service

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The following description was written by Greg Olsen and Robert Sutton for the National Register:

Skidmore/Old Town Historic District was once the center of commerce and entertainment in Portland and contains the city's largest remaining collection of mid to late 19th century business buildings. The district is an area of approximately 20 blocks centered on Burnside Street and bordered by the Willamette River on the east. The district is known throughout the United States for its Italianate architecture. The wooden cornices, masonry bearing walls, and the use of architectural cast iron in the street level facades once typified the streets of Portland and are well represented in the present Skidmore/Old Town Historic District. The focal point and source of the district name is the Skidmore Fountain built in 1888 and donated to the city by Stephen G. Skidmore.

The Skidmore Fountain was conceived and executed by Olin J. Warner, a sculptor of national reputation. It consists of an ornate bronze basin eight feet in diameter held aloft by an ionic shaft and two bronze caryatids of classical form and drapery. An octagonal granite pool 20 feet in diameter collects the splashing water from above and lion heads below spout small streams of water into the four horse and dog troughs. Metal drinking cups hung below the pool until the first years of the twentieth century when they were removed in the interest of public safety.

The New Market Theater, located about 100 feet southwest of the fountain, was built by pioneer seaman and merchant Alexander Ankeny in 1872. W. W. Piper, Oregon's first professional architect, designed the three-story brick building in the North Italian mode of the Renaissance Revival. The handsome structure housed an arcaded street level public market, a small restaurant and Portland's grandest theater between 1872 and 1884. The building retains its original east and west facades except for six cornice urns which have been removed and an 1884 remodeling of the theater's east entrances. The interior of the first level is restorable but the theater is now used for automobile parking and has been severely altered.

The New Market Alley Building was constructed soon after 1872 and housed the city council in 1879. This small two-story masonry building covered the alley entrance on the south side of the New Market Theater. The two arches on the street level allowed access to the alley, one for incoming and one for outgoing wagons. The building was constructed in the Italianate style although it shares the same cornice with the neighboring High Victorian Italianate Poppleton Building to the south.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Portland's Skidmore-Old Town marks the site where the city started and then flourished. It contains buildings in a variety of high-Victorian styles, many made of cast iron, comprising one of the most impressive commercial blocks on the west coast.

The city developed with profits from gold, timber and the Indian Wars and by 1860, the frame structures were replaced by "commercial palaces" of brick and cast iron, which one traveller described as "probably the finest commercial street (Front Street) west of St. Louis. Railroads and frequent flooding drove the newer city inland and in the 20th century the area decayed until the 1950's when restoration began with the Warner fountain and the New Market Theatre block.

In Portland, A Historical Guide the area is described as follows:

#### The Skidmore Fountain Olin Warner, 1888

This fountain, like many of the city's monuments and sculpture, has had a perilous history. It all began with Oregon's decision to send six honorary commissioners to the great Paris Exposition of 1878. One of the commissioners, Stephen Skidmore, was so taken with the plazas and fountains of Europe that on his return he included in his will a bequest for a fountain for the "horses, men and dogs" of Portland....

After the usual bickering over where to place the fountain, this site was finally chosen and Warner came from New York to view it before beginning his work. He believed the fountain's frame would be as important as the fountain itself. And what a splendid frame he had for it; a moderately sized, irregularly shaped six-sided plaza, cobbled in Belgian block, Florentine and Baroque facades set like screens around it, these spaced by the plaza's five streets leading off in long, slating vistas of classical arcades. Not only a superb physical setting but here, too, was concentrated the town's life: the Board of Trade, the Opera House, the market, Wells Fargo, the telegraph office, saloons and chop and oysters houses and a few steps away the docks.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 44 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,0 5 2,5 9,2,0 5,0 4,1 10,0  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B 1,0 5 2,5 9,2,0 5,0 4,0 4,6,0  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 1,0 5 2,5 5,0,0 5,0 4,0 6,7,0

D 1,0 5 2,5 5,0,0 5,0 4,1 1,2,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey Division, NPS

DATE

2/19/77

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Skidmore/Old Town Historic District

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 2

Statewide Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings

December 30, 1974 State

Parks and Recreation Section, Oregon State Highway Building

Salem, Oregon

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The Poppleton Building, probably constructed in 1873, is composed of cast iron pilasters and thresholds, plastered brick, and wooden windows and cornice detail. This corner building now houses a modern specialty shop and has been altered structurally to allow access between the three original divisions.

The New Market Annex abuts both the Poppleton Building and the New Market Theater, and is considered the city's best example of Richardsonian Romanesque Architecture. The Annex was built in 1889 and, as originally, supports mixed commercial use. The exterior remains intact and is unaltered. The building has unusual rounded brick detail in the window arches and finely crafted wrought iron work in the tie bars, the corner sign, and the elaborate front fire escape.

Across the street stands the Bickel Building constructed in 1892. This two story masonry Queen Anne structure at first housed the Portland City Council and general offices. Today the exterior remains intact, including the handsome dark red brick with white detail. The interior has been altered to house both a warehouse, store and restaurant.

The Chown Building located in the next block to the south was constructed in 1889. It stands well preserved between the three story Livery Building and a compatible twentieth century building. This two story masonry building is typically Italianate in composition. It is detailed in the Queen Anne style, has slender cast iron columns, and features flowing arches in the manner of the Richardsonian Romanesque. Although an unusual combination of styles, this building contributes handsomely to the nineteenth century flavor of the Skidmore District.

The large four story Haseltine Building built in 1893 is located across Second Street from the Chown Building. Constructed for a wholesale business, this pile is a good example of Richardsonian Romanesque and remains intact today except for a lost cornice.

The "Old Spaghetti Factory" is a modern name for the Livery Building which neighbors the Chown Building to the south. Built in 1886 the three story Italianate structure has been converted to restaurant use. Although well preserved, the building lost the Livery character in the 1969 interior alteration and exterior painting. This Livery was at one time the largest in Portland.

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The Oregon Marine Building is located on the SE corner of the next block to the south. It was designed by Warren H. Williams who also designed Villard Hall on the University of Oregon campus, and the Calvery Presbyterian Church in Portland (now known as The Old Church). Both are listed on the National Register.

This three story masonry structure is a good representation of the High Victorian Italianate style which was once common in Portland. It was constructed in 1886 and was designed for mixed commercial use. Today this building stands basically intact and remains in commercial use.

Across the street stands 224 First Avenue, a High Victorian Italianate structure constructed in 1889. The street elevation is two story; cast iron columns support an upper brick wall with finely plastered moulding. Although the street level is slightly altered, the building stands basically intact.

The Delschneider building is located around the corner to the east. This two story brick building was constructed in 1859, and had a third floor added about 1877. The detail of the third floor facade is similar to the second except that the bracketed window cornices are made of tin rather than wood and the brackets and mouldings are a slightly different shape. Today the Italianate facade appears as it did after the completion of the third story and adds greatly to the cross section of architectural style in the district.

The Hallock and McMillan Building which abuts the Delschneider on the east side, is the oldest extant brick structure in Portland. It was constructed in 1857. Although greatly altered and completely covered by remodeling, the basic structure remains and there are sufficient early drawings and photographs available to provide the basis for an accurate restoration.

Abutting the Hallock and McMillan Building to the north is 233 SW Front. Built as a drug store in 1883-4, the two story masonry structure incorporates cast iron, brick, plaster, wood, and glass to form a fine example of High Victorian Italianate. The building today is well maintained, complete and intact.

The Smith Block which dominates the next block to the north were constructed in 1872 as rental merchantile buildings. These two story brick structures still retain their original second story sash with four lights over four and most of the cast iron arcades that were common in Portland in the 1870s and 80s. Although some wooden cornices are removed and many street level facades are altered, the block stands to remind Portland of the Italianate Architecture that once pervaded the city.

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To the north of Skidmore Fountain stands the Packer Scott Building, built in 1890 and designed by the prominent Portland architects Whidden and Lewis (who later designed Portland's City Hall and other noteworthy buildings in the city). Constructed of brick and rusticated stone, this wholesale warehouse is best described as Richardsonian Romanesque. This building, the last one standing on the block, remains unaltered.

To the north, on the other side of the Burnside Bridge ramp stands the Blagen Block built in 1888. This building is used by Marcus Whiffen in American Architecture Since 1780 to exemplify the High Victorian Italianate style. Although altered on one side at the street level, Blagen Block is otherwise completely intact. The interior is now used as a shop and warehouse.

Also on this block stands two other major historic buildings. A High Victorian Italianate building now owned and operated as a warehouse by Import Plaza abuts Blagen Block to the east. Although once ornately detailed, the building now retains only a fraction of its former facade. The adjacent structure to the south of Blagen Block houses Frank's Tool and Supply. This building's detail could be described as Sullivanesque although the vertical composition is broken by strong horizontal spandrels. The building is an interesting survivor; it is unaltered and is intact except for cornice and spandrel ornament.

The Merchant's Hotel is the largest High Victorian Italianate example remaining in the district. Located on the north half of the next block to the northwest, the three story hotel was constructed in 1885 and remains reasonably intact although the cornice is gone and the street level elevations are significantly altered. Across the street to the southwest stands the Florence McDonnell Building. This three story masonry building is another good example of High Victorian Italianate. It remains intact with only slight alterations in the street level elevations.

The buildings described above are the structures within the district considered to be primary landmarks by the City of Portland. There are, however, at least seven other 19th century buildings within the district which add to its architectural flavor. In most cases the facades of these buildings have been altered significantly, but many retain their original detail in the second story windows. Nearly all of these buildings are restorable to their original appearance. The known examples are indicated on the accompanying map.



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The district also contains many early twentieth century commercial buildings. At least three of these structures are significant examples of the Commercial style. Nearly all of these later supportive structures are critically important in establishing the character of the district. It is vital to understand that the landmarks of the district were designed to fit an urban environment and are unable to stand alone as monuments and retain their architectural brilliance. The twentieth century buildings that are supportive of the district are indicated on the accompanying map.

Primary landmarks, potential nineteenth century landmarks, and supportive twentieth century structures comprise 53 percent of the district excluding streets. Approximately five percent of the district is occupied by buildings that are intrusions to the district because of the design concepts, the scale, and the materials employed.

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The New Market Theater, W. W. Piper, 1872

Had someone, one wonders--perhaps the architect, perhaps the builder--once been to Convent Garden? In any event, this structure was built to be both a produce market and a theater, cabbages on the first floor, tenors on the second. In the market there were 28 marble-countered stalls, each in its own arched and pillared niche. Would that we had the market now. Upstairs the theater was crimson with plush and glimmered in the light of 100 gas jets, its 40 by 60 drop curtain a blue and hazy dream of the Mediterranean--an ambience all in all "bewildering to the senses," as one contemporary said. It is now under restoration.

The Poppleton Building

The New Market's neighbor on the northwest corner of First and Ash was erected sometime in the 1870's and its dark and mottled green facade suggests a century of river mist and damp--a rather recent paint job. The ground floor line of windows is divided by light cast iron pilasters from which spring double arabesques of cast iron leaf, while above, a heavy cornice rests on bulgy consoles of clustered grapes. The upper story is a simple statement of truncated arches, set by threes into squares, each arch crowned with the flourish of a foliated keystone. The whole facade gives some idea of the somber yet graceful dignity which once surrounded the fountain.

The Blagen Block, 78 N.W. Couch

About the best remaining example of a Portland "commercial palace." Its construction is typical: wooden beams and joists, brick walls surfaced with cement plaster, an ensemble of cast iron ornament bolted to the walls. Finally, the whole painted in shades of gray and white. The principal cast iron elements in the Blagen Block are the ground floor colonnade plus a number of lions and ladies which at intervals ornament the whole facade, the ladies with their spiked crowns copies perhaps of the Liberty erected two years before in New York's harbor. The facade in general is a grand exercise in fenestration, each story with its own order of arches, the whole composition topped by a parapet and two overhanging pediments beneath which shelter the building's name and date."

T O'Donnell, Terence and Vaughn, Thomas Portland, A Historical Sketch and Guide  
Oregon Historical Society 1963, pp. 91-111.

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There is a rich variety of Italianate, Richardsonian-Romanesque, classic styles-- an extraordinary collection of rich facades and utilitarianism. The Smith Block on S.W. Front St. still evokes the description.

"Coming ashore from a four-master or paddlewheeler and passing through the cavernous sheds, one came out onto cobbled Front Street to see on its far side these buildings, managing somehow to look both flamboyant and grave, filled with the activity of shipping offices, emporiums, saloons and oyster houses, glimmering in the rain."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid p. 110

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